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ABSTRACT

Being a teaching professional is a complex task within the social and organizational context in which teachers work. A model, "Variability of Developmental Needs within a Teaching/Learning Situation," provides a visual picture of the wide variety of students, typically in the broad but "average range" of knowledge, social/emotional, and physical development, that comprise a classroom. This paper describes characteristics essential to becoming a high-quality "professional teacher." These characteristics include the following: (1) the professional teacher as master communicator, understanding and using positive communication within interpersonal relationships; (2) the professional teacher as researcher--knowing how to assess readiness levels for every student through the use of multiple observation procedures; and (3) the professional teacher as scholar in a variety of educational and social areas, including the general social milieu, knowledge and skills in curriculum content and methodology, and principles of human development and learning. Four charts display major areas related to the extensive knowledge and scholarship required of professional teachers and some of the more critical principles of human development and learning. (LL)

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PROFESSIONAL TEACHER

MASTER COMMUNICATOR

RESEARCHER

SCHOLAR

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A paper presented to

Honors Week:
A Celebration of Teaching

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PROFESSIONAL TEACHER:
Master Communicator, Researcher & Scholar

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INTRODUCTION

Professional Teacher in Context

Being a teaching professional is quite different than being a medical doctor or psychologist. The complexity of the task is similar with regard to applying particular knowledge and skills to assist human beings toward health and success, but the social/organizational context within which teachers work is quite different.

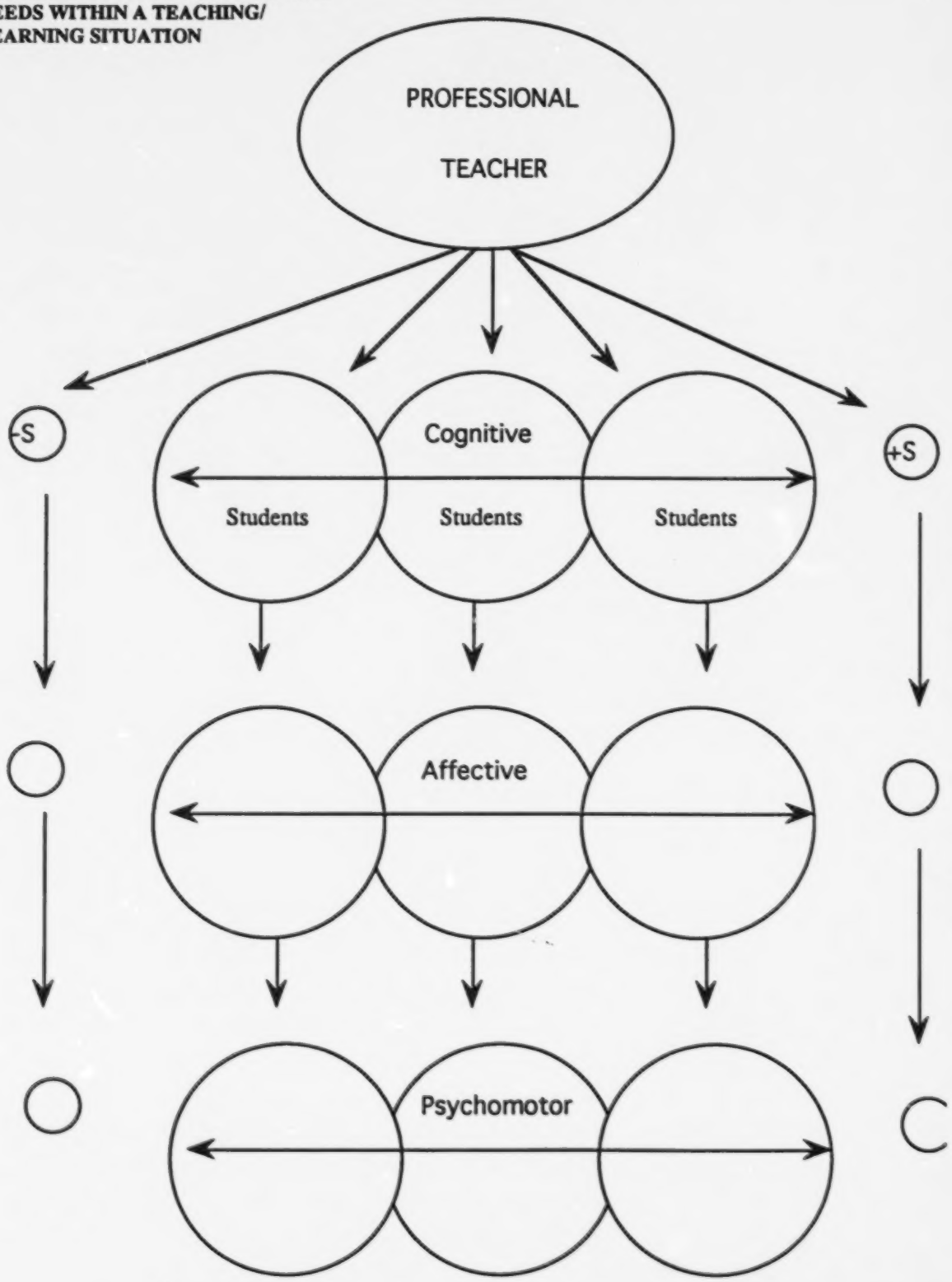
A doctor and psychologist is only up against one complex person at a time; teachers are "courageous" enough to approach more than ten, twenty, thirty or more all at one time! Teaching is a very complex business, and it is very consuming if one desires to be a high-quality professional. Furthermore, when a professional works with one person in a private office, this only adds the potential of needing to deal with that person's parent/s or loved ones, and with a specific identifiable problem. When a teacher has a class full of an extreme variety of the public's children/students to bring along in areas involving a comprehensive set of social, emotional and academic learning needs the situation is indeed heavy.

The model (Variability of Developmental Needs Within a Teaching/Learning Situation) shown on the following page provides a visual picture depicting a teacher working with students who are typically in the broad but "average range" of knowledge, social/emotional and physical development. In actuality, there are usually some students who go beyond a normal range into an abnormal one, i.e., either very bright or well developed in some or all characteristics, or extremely underdeveloped in some or all cognitive, affective and psychomotor areas.

To add to the difficulties faced by any teacher, many people in the "public" feel they "own" the schools, and in many cases have little understanding of the comprehensiveness of the teaching/learning situation. Rather than playing a supportive role in assisting their child by working with them and the school/teacher, some expect their children to receive the total available focus. In working with groups in classrooms and subject areas, this type of special interest is not within the realm of feasibility!

A discussion of some of the key areas of being a "professional teacher," and those crucial characteristics of a master communication, researcher and scholar follows (p 3):

VARIABILITY OF DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS WITHIN A TEACHING/ LEARNING SITUATION



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Professional Qualities of Effective Teaching & Learning

The following is a general, but comprehensive outline of definitions and principles which describe the key teacher/learning characteristics which are essential to become a high-quality professional:

I. Student learning and development is most effective when each individual person is exposed to "high-quality professionals."

   A. Professional teachers are understanding and use positive communication with interpersonal relationships. All students learn to a greater degree when positive communication is used, rather than through application of negative and authoritarian procedures.

   B. Teaching professionals are astute researchers. They know how to assess readiness levels for every one of their students, and through the use of multiple observation procedures. Each student learns to a greater degree when teachers have observed what level of knowledge or skills they have obtained and therefore, what they are ready to learn.

   C. Teaching professionals know the principles or laws of human development and learning, and they can apply their instructional procedures to the readiness level of each student. For example, every individual is unique and will never be the same as any other person. Children develop from head to toe, and center to periphery. No matter what age, early learning of anything is slow, and it accumulates and gets faster as a person is exposed to related experiences; that's the way the brain works. Children and young adults develop sequentially; learning is accumulative, and time and timing of experiences is most effective depending on each unique person.

   D. Teaching professionals have understanding, knowledge and skills of essential content, and the school's curriculum is valid for students to spend their time and energy learning. Students learn necessary content if it is positively introduced to all students at each one's readiness level.

The Professional Teacher as a Master Communicator

Professional teachers are understanding and use positive communication with interpersonal relationships. All students learn to a greater degree when positive communication is used, rather than through application of negative and authoritarian procedures.

The type and level of communication and interpersonal relationships within the teaching/learning situation impact the emotional health of students, which in turn directly influence the productivity of learning and development. This is basically translated into the degree to which goals, objectives or outcomes of teachers and organizations are realized. Table 1 on the following two pages depicts positive and negative factors of communication and associated feelings and emotional responses of personnel. A master

Table 1

Positive & Negative Psychological Factors of Communication and

Associated Feelings and Emotional Responses of Personnel

Type & Level of Communication	Receptor Feelings	Receptor Emotions
Positive Factors Of:	Positive Feelings Of:	Emotional Responses Of:
Attentive	Acceptance	Affection
Compassionate	Achievement	Calm
Caring	Approval	Contentment
Challenging Tasks	Belonging	Happiness
Clear Communicator	Bonding	Joyful
Clear Eval. Criteria	Clear Purpose	Love
Collaborative	Comfort	Relaxation
Cooperative	Confident	Serenity
Clear Goals/Defined	Contentment	Satisfaction
Cultural Awareness	Empathy	Warmth
Decisive	Important Work	
Honesty	Knowledge of Progress	
Input/Openness	Meaningful Work	
Feedback on Progress	Options for Improvement	
Good Leadership Models	Pride	
Holistic View	Relaxation	
Listening	Respected	
Management Style	Rewarded	
Mentoring	Satisfaction	
Motivation	Security	
Nurturing Environment	Self-Actualization	
Objective Evaluation	Self-Assured	
Pleasant Work Area	Self-Confidence	
Positive Communication	Successful	
Praise	Supported	
Professional	Task Completion	
Recognition	Wanted	
Reinforcement		
Respect		
Responsible		
Risk Free		
Safe Environment		
Sense of Humor		
Social Network		
Supportive		
Taken Seriously		
Tolerance		
Trust		
Understanding		
Values		

Negative Factors Of:	Negative Feelings Of:	Emotional Responses Of:
Abusive Authoritarian Autocratic Body Language Competition Confrontational Controlling Behavior Critical Thinking Ability Criticism Degrading Demoralizing De-Motivating Deceitful Dictator Management Style Dishonesty Distrust Dysfunctional Emotional Health Grandiosity Hidden Agendas Ignoring Inconsistency Inflexibility Lack of Boundaries Negative Communication Non-Cooperative Ostracism Rejecting Reprimands Resentment Retaliating Power Plays Punishment Sexual Harassment Strict Threats (verbal/physical) Uncertainty Unfairness/Competition Unpredictable Unstable Leadership	Antonyms of Positive Feelings Alienation Anxiety Apathy Apprehension Disapproval Discouraged Disgust Excluded Failure Frustration Inferiority Insecurity Lack Self-confidence Low Productivity Low Self-Esteem Mistrust Negative Attitude Rejection Resentment Sickness Trepidation Uncertainty Unwanted	Anger Anxious Depression Fear Frustrated Hate Insecure Jealousy Nervous Offended Resentment Selfishness Shame Stress Withdrawal

teacher/communicator consistently uses positive communication with all children/students and parents for whom he/she is responsible.

The Professional Teacher as a Researcher

Teaching professionals are astute researchers. They know how to assess readiness levels for every one of their students, and through the use of multiple observation

procedures. Each student learns to a greater degree when teachers have observed what level of knowledge or skills they have obtained and therefore, what they are ready to learn.

The most recent approaches use quantitative and qualitative multimethodological assessment and documentation procedures. Students are assessed with much more than quantitative standardized tests, and are evaluated with more comprehensive procedures, such as *portfolios*. In this way, individuals can be seen as "totally" developing persons rather than as an isolated math or reading score. Another expanded application modern professionals use is a pre- post-measure procedure of assessment of student progress. As shown in the following figure, a pre-evaluation design is no longer seen as sufficient to show student classroom progress. Without an initial observation of learning (pre-observation), the "only teaching something and assessing" just does not provide any information about where each student began and the amount of success achieved as a result of the experiences the teacher provided.

Figure 1

Basic Quantitative or Qualitative

Evaluation Research Design

Pre-Evaluation Design

X 0

The pre-evaluation design provides no usable information about the impact of program or teaching quality or effectiveness.

Pre- Post-Evaluation Design

0 X 0

The pre- post-evaluation design provides the evidence of accountability related to the impact of program and teaching quality or effectiveness.

Long-Range Evaluation Design

0 X 0 X 0 X 0 X 0 X 0 X 0 X 0 >>

The long-range evaluation design provides the evidence of accountability related to the impact of program or teaching quality and effectiveness over a long-range of formative and summative documentation and profiling.

0 = qualitative and/or quantitative assessment/measurement

X = application of teaching, program/s, development plans, improvements, etc.

Each key organizational component is evaluated on a time-series design proceeding from baseline readiness levels, tracked and profiled through analysis and documentation, and reported to all key stakeholders for planning and improvement.

The Professional Teacher as a Scholar

The professional teacher must be a scholar in a variety of related educational and social areas. Three key factors include the general social milieu, and specifically, knowledge and skills in curriculum content, methodology and the principles of human development and learning (Exhibits A & B pictorialize this comprehensive context).

The Social Milieu: A professional teacher must be knowledgeable about the social setting, and the appropriate roles played by different groups and individuals within the school/community milieu. For example, following are obligations, assumptions, expectations, roles and responsibilities of key individuals and groups in the support and function of the immediate school/community situation:

- Each student learns how to learn to his/her greatest potential and to take increasing responsibility for personal (and community) progress and success in the future.
- Each Parent or Guardian supports the school and assists his/her child in successfully learning to their greatest potential.
- Each Teacher understands and applies necessary curriculum content, assessment of learning readiness levels, the principles of human development and learning and appropriate and meaningful delivery for maximum positive impact on each student's learning.
- Each Administrator supports the parents, teachers and students in meeting their responsibilities of effective parenting, teaching and learning; evaluates the progress of all essential components which impact on student experiences within the school's responsibility; and based on assessed needs and objective information, directs implementation of school growth and improvement plans.
- Each Support Staff Member understands the importance of his/her role in assisting the school in providing the most positive learning experiences for students.
- The PTA & Other Internal Groups directly support the school's responsibilities, and provide positive programs which focus on important school development and improvement plans designed to impact positively on student learning and success.
- The Governing Board understands roles and responsibilities of students, teachers, administrators, support staff, internal school groups, community members, state and local policy and legal requirements, and makes appropriate board-level decisions which will provide the most positive environment for successful student growth and learning.
- The Community understands the roles and responsibilities of the school in meeting the public trust, and appropriately supports school programs and activities which have a positive impact on student learning and development.
- All individuals and groups responsible for maximum student learning and success understand and support the use of positive (not negative) communication processes and procedures.

Content and Methodology: Teaching professionals have understanding, knowledge and skills of essential content, and their curriculum/objectives are valid for students to spend their time and energy learning. In keeping with principles of development, students learn necessary content if it is positively introduced to all students at each one's readiness level.

Space and time do not allow an in-depth discussion of the academic background and specific skills development required of a qualified teaching professional, but it is clearly evident that pre-teaching and continuing inservice learning and development in content and methodologies which meet student needs is extensive.

Principles of Human Development: Teaching professionals know the principles, or laws of human development and learning, and they can apply their instructional procedures to the readiness level of each student. For example, every individual is unique and will never be the same as any other person. Children develop from head to toe, and center to periphery. No matter what age, early learning of anything is slow, and it accumulates and gets faster as a person is exposed to related experiences; that's the way the brain works. Children and young adults develop sequentially; learning is accumulative, and time and timing of experiences is most effective depending on each unique person.

Exhibit C pictorializes some of the more critical principles of human development and learning. A professional teacher knows these principles and consistently applies them in his/her teaching, assessing, planning and delivery of an instructional program which meets individual student needs.

Summary & Conclusions

In summary, Exhibits A and B show several of the major areas related to the extensive knowledge and scholarship required of professional teachers. If one thinks about the amount and quality of knowledge and skills needed for each general factor listed in the exhibits under "context components," "content components," "program application," "program results" and "psychological environment," it would be an eye-opener for those who think *professional teaching* is easy. This researcher and writer knows that teaching is one of the most comprehensive and complex professions, and those who know that have come to admire the teaching profession very much indeed. *A professional teacher is a master communicator, researcher and scholar.*

COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENT & EVALUATION

Packard, 93

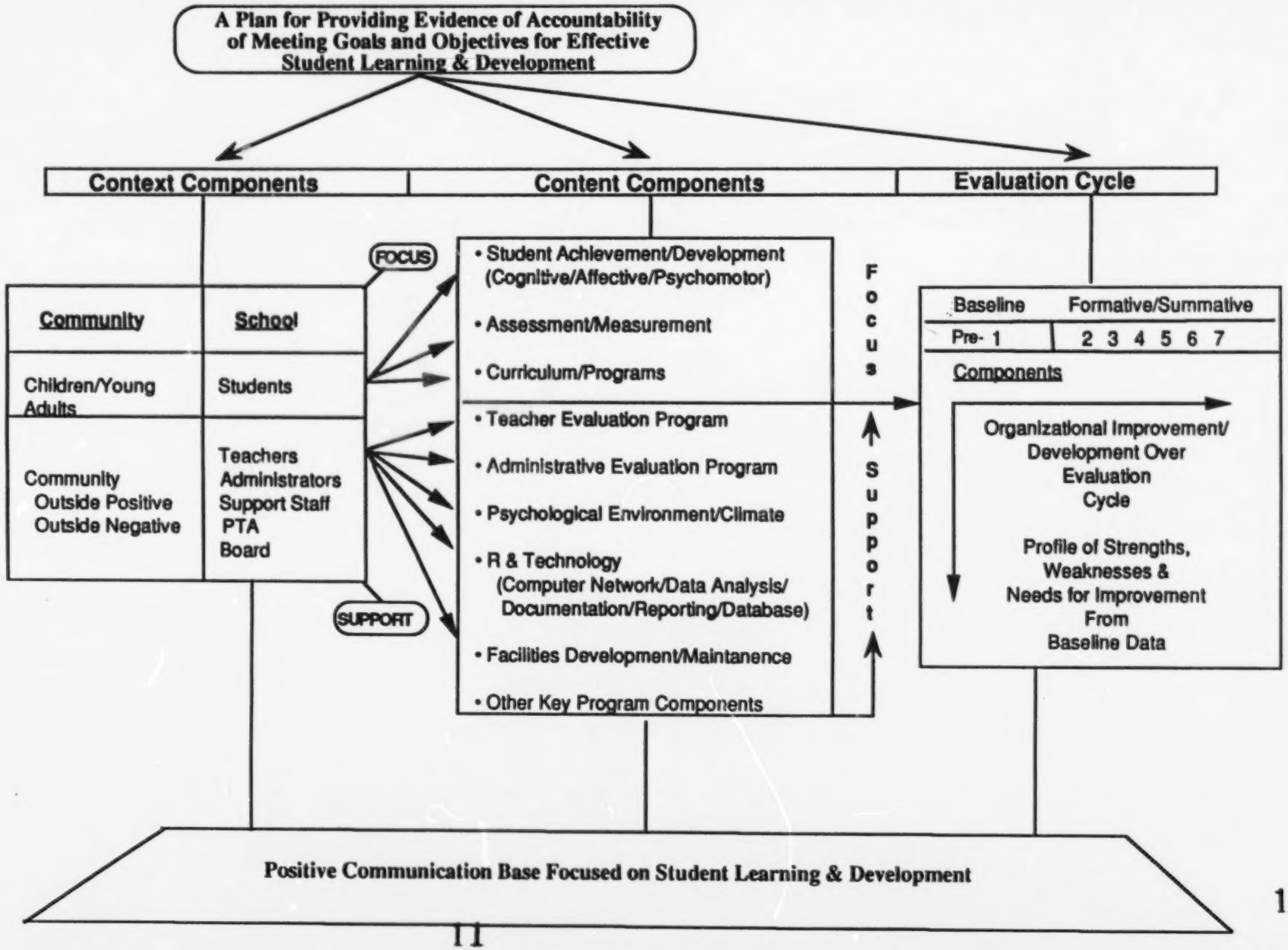
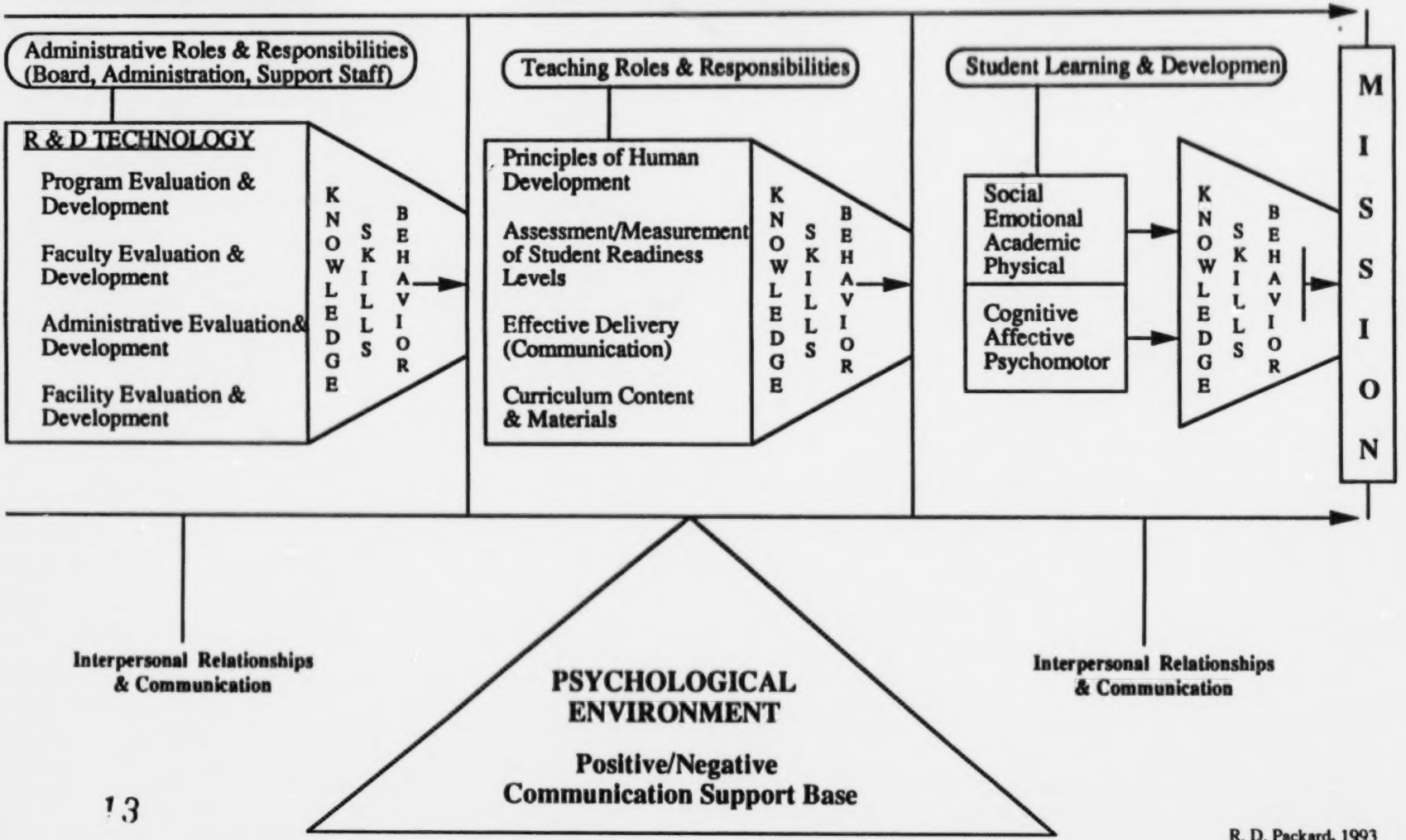


Exhibit A

Exhibit B

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION

Meeting School Responsibilities & Goals Through Comprehensive Evaluation & Development

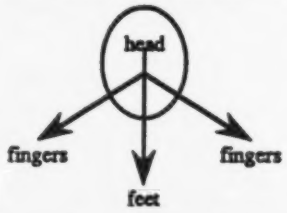


R. D. Packard, 1993

PRINCIPLES APPLIED TO DEVELOPMENT AND LEARNING

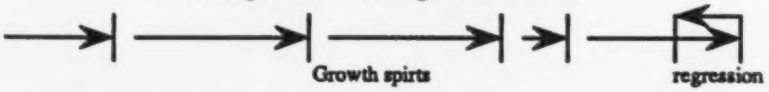
- Growth in any characteristic is continuous, orderly, unfolding & sequential

- Growth is from head to foot and center to periphery



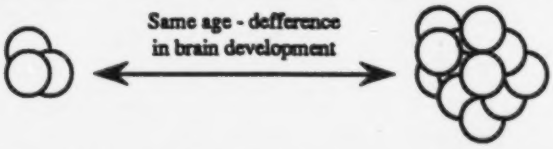
- Growth is structure is paralleled by functional changes

- Development in any characteristic proceeds at an uneven pace
- All aspects of development interact



- Each child differs from another in his/her rate of growth
- Time & timing with learning experiences are individually crucial
- Energies expended on one characteristic may get in the way of another

- Experiences are cumulative & based on previous level of development



- At any age early learning of any concept is slow
- Teaching beyond ones readiness level results in failure